own habits often neutralise the treatment he receives, so 743
that these diseases remain as deep-rooted as ever in the 744
peasant class.' If only they would pay attention, until 164
more can be done, to the advice and directions which are given them! The answer is that even if they tried they could not hope to succeed, because the conditions under which they live are at every point unfavourable to the attempt. Here lies the heart of the problem.

(4) *Food and Drink*

Water is the first problem; not this time considered for 271
its use in irrigation, which has been studied over and over [132]
again, but as a much more vital need in supplying human nourishment. Egypt is a hot country, and the fellah's work makes him sweat, so that thirst affects him more than most other people.

Where the owner of an *'ezba* has installed a pump, the 271
fellaheen may get their water from an artesian well. If 312
their village is on the river bank, they will use water from the Nile, which is silty but fresh-running. But more often than not they can drink only brackish and stagnant water from the irrigation canals.

In these, men and animals cleanse and relieve them- [296
selves; vegetables, clothes, and crockery are washed, and [515
carrion is thrown away: and this is the place to which women 364]
come to get "drinking water". They bring it home in the early evening, in their ewers or tins, to fill up the great pot, 271
or *zir*, that stands against the house wall. Each fellaha 415
brings back about six gallons each evening for the next day's use. This water she adds to what already remains in the *zir*, so that the bottom is never dry, and never cleaned. The water stands all night, so that some of the dirt settles. It also cools, owing to evaporation through the porous clay. As for the drops which filter through, and which might be used to fill the drinking-pots with pure water for the morning, they simply run to waste in puddles or are drunk by the fowls.

The Government, however, is busily studying the question of supplying drinking-water to the villages, and numerous plans have been made.

Men have always added something to water to give it a 273
taste. The fellah is no exception. Wine he does not drink,

Paradoxical as it may seem, there appears to be a relation between the increase in this "drug habit" and the development of perennial irrigation. It has in fact been proved that this invention, which has doubled Egypt's wealth, has also encouraged bilharzia and ankylostomiasis. These diseases weaken the fellah and reduce his power to work. He seeks relief in the stimulant readiest to hand. As the men, who spend their lives in mud and water, are more affected by these diseases than the women, they are also more addicted to this "black tea" (44).

The cultivation of tobacco, which was brought into Egypt at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was forbidden by a decree of 25th June, 1890. Imported in the raw state from Greece, Turkey and Japan, and processed in Egypt, it is too dear for most of the fellaheen. As with coffee, it is in much greater use in the towns (47).

As a rule the fellaheen eat three meals a day; at sunrise before leaving for work (*futûr*); about 10 o'clock, in the field (*ghâda*); and at home at dusk (*'asha*). The fellaheen always sit cross-legged on the ground, and eat with their fingers.

Those at work usually eat their lunch (*ghâda*) in the open air and in company, each taking his food from the plate or enamel pot his wife has brought him, while the water bottle passes from hand to hand.

The chief meal is supper, which consists of warm cooked food eaten with the family. Cooking is done with oil over a Primus stove, or in a household oven fed with strawed cow-dung (*gilla*).

The fellaheen do not go in for cattle-rearing, and as meat is expensive they cannot eat much of it. They have mutton or beef at most once a week, and at least on the two great festivals, or when an animal is killed by accident. This means an orgy, at which everyone puts away tremendous helpings of food. Every now and again some rich man, for a vow or a funeral, kills an ox or *gamoossa* and gives away its meat; then the poorest can have a feast for nothing.

Those who live on the banks of the Nile, a large canal, or a lake, use nets to catch small fish, which they cook in oil. But most of them are limited to vegetables. Onions (*bassal*), turnips (*lift*), green peppers (*filfil*) and cucumbers (*khiyâr*) are eaten raw. Vegetables which they cook are ladies' fingers (*bâmia*) and *molokhiya* (Jew's mallow) (48), both of

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13

Chapter VIII

TRADITIONS OF THE SOIL

181 Certain traditions, rites and ceremonies are handed down from generation to generation without being either questioned or understood(**). These are traditions of the soil, bearing witness to the union of the fellah with his field, and the closeness of the peasant group to soil and water and their products.

This intimacy was clear enough when we were considering the work, life and home of the fellah. We shall do well to prepare ourselves for a study of the fellah's psychology (Chapter IX) by considering some of the traditional rites and customs which are to be met with at every turn of his life.

These are not merely superstitions, though it would be as difficult for us as it is for the fellaheen themselves to explain the origin or meaning of them all. One thing they all seem to have in common: they point to a mysterious correlation between nature and man. Unconsciously or subconsciously, in repeating these rites the fellah shows an instinctive feeling that he belongs to the soil. It is a feeling which has contributed a good deal to the stagnation of the Egyptian countryside.

312 The fellaheen have a great respect for water, the water
● 271 that comes from the Nile. They avoid filtering it, so as
823 not to take the life out of it. They bring it to be blessed by the passing missionary, and offer it as a familiar and much-appreciated drink. They never mistrust it, and make no distinction between washing- and drinking-water. All water is good, like the Nile from which it comes.

796 The festival of the Bride of the Nile, or the Cutting of the Dam, takes place in Cairo (**) at the height of the flood. The fellah has no part in it, but he feels much more than any townsman that the Nile is male and alive. The river
823 is always flowing within his sight, either in the foreground,

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13

Today only 25% of the population, that is to say the inhabitants of the towns, drink pure water. A few new waterworks are established from time to time. In 1940 the whole *mudiriya* of the Fayûm, the furthest from the Nile, was fitted up with a model installation. But the fellaheen are still slow to make use of these benefits. For example at Nekhéla, a big village of 20,000 souls near Abu Tig, a drinking-water supply was recently introduced by the progressive local Council. The women have to pay one millieme to fill a petrol tin or *ballas* at the public tap. But they prefer to use the river-water, which is abundant and free of charge. *Ghaffirs* have had to be posted to prevent them from doing so and to force them to profit by the progress they scorn. 271 312

The creation of model villages has been more tempting to Governments. Mohammed Aly over a century ago established a dozen places on a rectilinear plan to serve as examples for others. Unfortunately the example of the unplanned villages was stronger, and today these places are scarcely distinguishable from the rest. 361 185 654

In 1914 the Khedive Abbas II inaugurated three rectilinear villages, each containing 180 houses, 169 of which were for the fellaheen and the rest for public services. Each dwelling consisted of two rooms and a yard. This experiment also failed, as the tenants modified the houses to suit their needs.

Nevertheless, after a twenty years' interval opinion is again turning to model villages. At the desire of the late King Fuad the farms on the Royal Domains have built for the labourers working on them symmetrical rows of houses with only a ground floor. They look like prisons to us, but to the fellaheen they are palaces.

Similar constructions have been planned or copied by a fair number of landowners, who have built cell-like dwellings of red or unbaked bricks for the fellaheen on their *'ezbas*.

The most interesting achievement, however, is that of the *'ezba* of Bahteem, belonging to the Royal Agricultural Society. The first part, finished in 1934, comprises thirty houses for workers and three for officials, together with public buildings. The dwellings run from north to south in five rows, and each row is divided into two groups by a street, widening into a square in the middle. Between each pair of

744 to provide public conveniences, in the effort to combat the diseases which lessen the fellah's output ? The Ministry of Public Health, founded in 1934, has given this question priority in its programme, but it has not a large budget, and most of its income goes to pay the salaries of its officials. It has, however, some genuine achievements to its credit. Sixty-seven dispensaries, permanent or travelling, are fighting bilharzia and ankylostomiasis. There are as many hospitals, with about four thousand beds in all, for serious illnesses. In 1936 there were 111 eye-clinics, which had treated 1,133,599 patients. Infant welfare is organised in some forty centres. Doctors, midwives, and visiting nurses, instead of waiting for the peasant woman to come and ask for help, go round from house to house to give treatment and advice. At least half a million visits have been made. By 1937 there were about five thousand certified midwives, who had taken a six months' course in a maternity hospital, and eight thousand of the second class, who had from three to six weeks' training.

744 747 To these splendid efforts must be added the even more devoted labours of private institutions : the dispensaries and home visits of the Franciscan Sisters of Egypt and the many other Catholic sisterhoods, the Protestant foundations, such as the C.M.S. and the American Mission, and the more recent and methodical 'social centres' established in a dozen villages in the Delta.

It is a vast field, and these efforts up to the present have affected only thousands out of millions. Even those fortunate few often lose the benefit of their medical treatment through their ignorance, their unhygienic habits, and their poverty. These are the obstacles to progress.

183 744 A model village has no power to make the fellah a healthy man, immune from sickness. The work of the authorities in the provinces is hardly more succesful. So long as the fellah keeps his present ways of thought and the ignorance that hinders him from knowing what is good for him and what is not, he will remain, in spite of all the improvements that are offered him, exactly as he is today. He will refuse filtered water and drink the impure water his fathers drank. Give him a light, airy, healthy dwelling, and he will pervert it to his own manner of life. He will still be unable to profit from the laws and institutions provided to help him.

● [271 356] 183

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

25.

×539 461 [271] At work in the dust and heat, this longing sigh for the water-jug is quite intelligible. Of a hot day, one of the boys steals away every few minutes to snatch a hasty drink.

Ya ballaṣ aḫḍar u-melān!
Ya giḍ'an, iḍ'u rēiskum.
Yalla ikfi šarr ez-zullām!

Thou moist, full water-jug!
You boys, beseech your overseer!
And thou, O Allah, make an end of the wickedness of the oppressors!

[192] 1. Aḫḍar has, beside its color-meanings green and gray (compare No. 21 note on l. 2) also the meaning "moist". For instance our servant, a youth from Saqqāra, would reply to the question: Is the wash dry? "Lā, lissa aḫḍar: No, it is still damp".

2. "Beseech" means, of course: "Beg him to stop the work".

26.

[651] [466] A reminiscence of the time when the excavations were carried on by forced labor (corvée). Not until the sun has run its course, can the workers hope for rest.

Ya samsĕ higgi, balaš dalā'a;
di šuṛlĕ mīri wa-la fīšĕ šafā'a.

Wander on, O sun, put aside your airs!
For this is forced labor and there is no intercession.

2. Others said here: da šuṛl uṣiye, that is to say: "labor on the crown-lands".